

A RUNNER'S MEDITATION

I saw a muskrat in the park
chewing grasses with perfect attention
in a pool of sunlight that
turned gold the tips of her
glistening chestnut hair.

I'd seen her before at just the end of dark
swimming the shallow stream that winds
through the park; just a smooth parting of the water;
then her endearing waddle as she
brought from the bank the right twig,
longer than herself and fringed in new leaves.
Grasping it firmly in delicate jaws
she melted into the water
and swam again and with a flip disappeared
into a hole in the bank.

I was pleased to know she was there going about her business,
and confident in her wisdom
to come out only before dawn,
before joggers and dog-walkers,
before anxious mothers could cry "RAT!"
to the park authorities in their ill-fitting green costumes.

Today she sits in the sun,
civil and lovely.
Surely she deserves to sit in the sun.

Does she think people so kind?

The park is in a town.

I fear for her and murmur a sacred name
in blessing as I pass.

In the path before me
lies a flower. I pick
it up. Its lavender petals
are nylon.
Its yellow stamen
plastic--
flung there no doubt
to mock the bees.

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